

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**  
**PROPOSED**  
**YUCCA MOUNTAIN RAILROAD CORRIDOR**  
**Impacts On**  
**RECREATION**  
**WILDERNESS**  
**WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS**  
**In**  
**Lincoln and Nye Counties, Nevada**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report is to advise the U.S. Department of Energy, Bureau of Land Management and the public of possible impacts to recreation, wilderness, and wilderness study areas that are located in Lincoln and Nye Counties as a result of the construction of the proposed rail line for the Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository. This proposed rail line will transport spent nuclear fuel from the vicinity of Caliente, Nevada to Yucca Mountain via a proposed 319 mile route.

The proposed route maps show the center line of the one mile wide route corridor. This is the point of contact for all resources identified on the maps and in the report.

## **Lincoln County Section**

### **RECREATION**

Traditionally, recreation on BLM managed lands in Lincoln County, Nevada has been dispersed. Throughout the approximately 5 million acres of BLM managed lands in the county there are 3 developed recreation sites. They are the Meadow Valley Recreation Site, Chief Mountain OHV Recreation Area (with 3 trailheads), and Ash Springs Recreation Site

Dispersed recreation is a large use in Lincoln County with hunting, camping, exploration/sightseeing, OHV competitive events, OHV recreation, and rock art viewing being the major activities.

Construction and operation of the proposed rail line could obstruct patterns of use for OHV competitive events trails and access routes for emergency personnel, and could cause major disruptions of the other recreation activities, especially in the Clover Creek drainage east of Caliente, north across the Beaver Dam Road onto the Miller Bench south of Panaca, across US HWY 93 and west across Bennett Pass to the Dry Lake Valley. (See Note 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

Field investigations indicated at least 17 OHV competitive routes (single track, two track, washes) would be affected and three major dirt roads for access to the routes (Clover Creek, Beaver Dam Road, Bennett Pass Road). (See Note 1-10)

As the proposed rail line route crosses Bennett Pass from US HWY 93 to Dry Lake Valley there is a natural "choke point" on the pass. The Bennett Pass Road, Silver State OHV Trail, and proposed rail line all occupy the same route for approximately .6 mile on the west side of the pass. There is a section of .2 mile on the east side of the pass where the road and proposed rail line occupy the same route. Access to the North Trailhead of the Chief Mountain OHV Recreation Area would be greatly impacted by proposed route. (See Note 5-10)

As the proposed rail line route continues west across the Dry Lake Valley it crosses the Power line Road and the Dry Lake Valley Road in the northern portion of the valley.

(See Note 10, 11)

The proposed route again crosses the Silver State OHV Trail at approximately mile 55.7, east of SR 318. It crosses SR 318 at mile 38.7 and continues west to the Timber Mountain Road where the proposed route crosses it approximately 4.9 miles west of SR 318. (See Note 13-15)

The proposed route continues west across the north end of the Coal Valley, then passes through another "choke point" at the Water Gap, which is the north end of the Golden Gate Range where the route splits into routes GV1, GV 2, and GV 3 as it enters Garden Valley. From Garden Valley the proposed route crosses over the pass at the north end of the Worthington Mountains and the proposed routes GV 1, GV 2, and GV 3 rejoin to continue into the Sand Spring Valley. (See Note 16-17)

As the proposed rail line route crosses the Coal Valley and Garden Valley it crosses major county roads on the west side of each valley that provide north-south travel routes.

The county road in the Garden Valley provides access to the Cherry Creek section of the Quinn Canyon Range of the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest.

The proposed rail line crosses a north-south county road on the east side of Sand Spring Valley and closely parallels another east-west county road across the valley, and then crosses the north-south Gunderson Road on the west side of the valley approximately 17 miles north of SR 375. The Gunderson Road is an access route to the Quinn Canyon section of the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest. (See Note 18)

The proposed route then continues to the south and west into Nye County.

## **WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

There are no Wilderness Study Areas in the Lincoln County portion of the proposed rail line route that would be impacted.

## **WILDERNESS**

There are two Wilderness Areas along the proposed rail line corridor, the Weepah Spring Wilderness and the Worthington Range Wilderness. These areas lay within one mile of the proposed rail corridor.

The Weepah Spring Wilderness is a mountain range representative of the Great Basin. It lacks a single defined ridgeline. The complex geology of the area forms a confused landscape: isolated peaks, maze-like canyons, and walls of fossil bearing rocks, natural arches, volcanic hoodoos, and the largest stand of ponderosa pine in eastern Nevada.

The Worthington Mountains Wilderness rises 4,000 feet above dry valleys of central Nevada to almost 9,000 feet. The limestone backbone of the mountain presents a difficult challenge to

visitors with heavily dissected, maze-like canyons, precipitous cliffs, knifelike limestone surfaces, and no surface water, and limestone caves, the largest being Leviathan.

1. Naturalness

The Weepah Spring and Worthington Mountains Wilderness are in a predominantly natural state with the evidence of human activity localized. Human imprints include both authorized and unauthorized activities. Authorized activities include various range improvements. Unauthorized disturbances include vehicle routes, now closed as a result of wilderness designation, these routes are generally 4WD access roads created by repeated cross-country travel.

2. Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Recreational uses of both Wilderness Areas include day hiking, backpacking, caving, photography, equestrian use, rockhounding, big game and upland bird hunting, wildflower viewing, bird watching, sightseeing, heritage tourism, and other activities.

The immense scenery of both areas, natural arches, caves, and vistas from the ridgeline of the Worthington Mountains as well as the summit of Timber Mountain in the Weepah Spring Wilderness provide an amazing backdrop for all Wilderness visitors.

The spelunking opportunities in Leviathan Cave are extraordinary with its huge entrance (100x180), cave formations, enormous chambers, narrow constricted passageways, and large ice formations during the winter and spring months.

3. Supplemental Values

Several special features were mentioned in the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2004 including ecologically diverse habitat and prehistoric cultural resources.

The Weepah Spring Wilderness includes the White River Narrows Archaeological District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and represents one of the largest and most well-known petroglyph concentrations in the state. Other prehistoric sites include shelter caves, hunting blinds and camp sites.

The Worthington Mountains feature a divergent flora from the curious combination Great Basin/Sonoran desert including cholla and cactus of the valley through pinyon - juniper, Limber and Ponderosa Pine, to the Bristlecone Pine of the craggy 9,000 foot summit ridge.

No buffer zones are created around Wilderness Areas to protect them from the influence of activities on adjacent land. When activities on adjacent lands are proposed, the specific impacts of those activities upon the Wilderness resources and public use of the Wilderness must be addressed the Environmental Impact Statement as appropriate.

The Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and other special features would not be directly affected by the proposed rail line corridor. Potential indirect impacts may include limiting the public's access to those portions of these Wilderness Areas in proximity to the proposed rail line corridor. The presence of the rail line corridor would impact the panoramic views from the higher elevations within the Wilderness Areas. In addition, visitors to those portions of the Wilderness Areas in proximity to the rail line corridor, perception of solitude may be impacted by the sites and sounds of the rail line corridor.

## **Nye County Section**

### **RECREATION**

Traditionally, recreation on BLM managed lands in Nye County, Nevada has been dispersed. Throughout the portion of lands in Nye County that is covered by this report there are no developed recreation sites.

Dispersed recreation is a significant use of the public lands in Nye County with hunting, camping, exploration/sightseeing, OHV competitive events, and OHV recreation being the major activities.

Construction and security of the proposed DOE rail line could obstruct use patterns in the Reville Valley due to the proposed rail line traversing from southeast to northwest across the valley and being on or adjacent to the existing county road I call the Willow Witch Well/Reville Mill Road for approximately 20 of the 35 mile length. (See Note 20-30)

As the proposed rail route crosses the Warm Spring Summit of US HWY 6 is less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile south of the road which could obstruct recreation use patterns. (Note 31)

The proposed route then enters Stone Cabin Valley and could obstruct recreation use patterns because it is parallel to a county dirt road that leads to the Tonopah Test Site, and at one point is less 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile east of the road. This road meets the paved Tonopah Test site road about 1 mile north of the test site gate. The route goes east paralleling the Tonopah Test Site north boundary through Ralston Valley and then turns south around the corner of the test site boundary in the vicinity of Mud Lake. (Note 32-35)

Data beyond the Mud Lake was not collected.

### **WILDERNESS**

There is no BLM Wilderness in this part of Nye County.

## **WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

There are two Wilderness Study Areas along the proposed rail line corridor in Nye County, the Kawich and South Reville Wilderness Study Areas. The Kawich Wilderness Study Area consists of rugged, mountainous country with a high central plateau and several peaks. The mountains and plateau rise up precipitously from the valley floor through deep canyons. The South Reville Wilderness Study Area is a thick multi-ridged strip of steep sided mountains rising to crests and flat-topped summits between 8,000 and 9,000 feet. Sheer cliffs form the mountain sides in many places and large canyons with steep walls run out to the edge of the valleys.

Wilderness Study Areas are managed under the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review. Lands outside the Wilderness Study Area boundaries are not subject to the Interim Management Policy. Indirect impacts to these Wilderness Study Areas include limiting public's access to these Wilderness Study Areas.

The South Reville WSA could be blocked off from access to the south and west sides depending on construction and security. Need map clarification: for several miles on the west WSA boundary the centerline and boundary line and county road are the same, until the route passes between the point where the South Reville WSA and the Kawich WSA boundaries touch and crosses the road so the rail center line is then on the east side of the road.

Going north towards the Reville Mill the route crosses the county road again.

The Kawich WSA currently has restricted access on the south side by military controlled lands. Depending on rail line construction and security, because the rail line route is on the east, north and west sides access could be a major issue.

## A. NOTES

1. All discussions are based on the "centerline" of the proposed DOE rail line route.
2. Route leaves Union Pacific Railroad main line in Clover Creek 6.5 miles east of Caliente, 2.7 miles east of Eccles Crossing, and at railroad milepost 466.37.  
UTM 11S 0729498  
4165292
3. Route crosses the Beaver Dam Road 2.4 miles east of US HWY 93 and 1.2 miles east of end of pavement. UTM 11S 0726351  
4171950
4. Route crosses US HWY 93 4.6 miles north of Beaver Dam Road junction @ Milepost 104.5. UTM 11S 0725888  
4180706
5. Route meets Bennett Pass Road and follows same route for .2 mile.  
UTM 11S 0714868  
4186585
6. Route meets and crosses Bennett Pass Road.  
UTM 11S 0713849  
4186622
7. Route crosses Bennett Pass Road and meets Silver State OHV Trail.  
UTM 11S 0711552  
4185563
8. Route crosses Bennett Pass Road and under power line.  
UTM 11S 0711172  
4185421
9. Route is same as Bennett Pass Road, Silver State OHV Trail east, and power line for .6 mile and leaves them at UTM 11S 0710267  
4183870
10. Route meets the Bennett Pass Road and the power line on the west side of pass.  
UTM 11S 0706386  
4184540
11. Route crosses the Power line Road on the east side of Dry Lake Valley.  
UTM 11S 0700458  
4189521

12. Route crosses Dry Lake Valley Road 16.8 miles north of US HWY 93.  
UTM 11S 0690444  
4191801
13. Route crosses the Silver State OHV Trail west @ trail mile 55.7.  
UTM 11S 0683019  
4198882
14. Route crosses NV SR 318 @ milepost 38.7.  
UTM 11S 0678919  
4209075
15. Route crosses the Timber Mountain Pass Road 4.9 miles west of SR 318.  
UTM 11S 0669831  
4219569
16. Route crosses through the Water Gap Road (Golden Gate Range).  
UTM 11S 0643825  
4211956
17. Route crosses the north end of the Worthington Mountains after the GV1, GV2, and GV3 routes meet on the east side of the pass, then stays to the north of the existing road by Batton Creek.
18. Route crosses the Gunderson Road west side of the Sand Spring Valley (road to Quinn Canyon in the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest) 17 miles north of SR 375. UTM 11S 0606046  
4198065
19. Route crosses SR 375 in Nye County 8 miles west of the Lincoln/Nye County Line. UTM 11S 0588546  
4183428
20. At milepost 43.6 of SR 375 a paved road (I call Cedar Pipeline Ranch Road) goes south and west towards Reveille Valley and the South Reveille WSA; 8.2 miles dirt road turns north which I call the Willow Witch Well/Reveille Mill Road then travel 1.4 mile where route SR3 is met. UTM 11S 0574902  
4179956
21. SR2 route crosses the WWW/RM Road 2.4 miles north of the CPR Road (about halfway down into wash) UTM 11S 0573812  
4181150



22. 3 miles north of the CPR Road is a South Reville WSA marker.  
UTM 11S 0573388  
4181784
23. 1.4 miles of route and road are the same.
24. 7.4 miles north of the CPR Road a 2 track goes west out of the wash and the rail centerline is 1 mile west of the WWW/RM Road  
UTM 11S 0569859  
4187655  
7.8 miles north of this junction is the actual Willow Witch Well on the east side of Road.
25. 4.7 miles north of Willow Witch Well is a corral on the east side of road; the route is 100 feet west of road. UTM 11S 0564997  
4193971
26. 5.2 miles north is a point where the South Reville WSA and Kawich WSA boundaries are close (Kawich is .2 mile west of road; South Reville is .2 mile south of corral which is on east side of road) the rail centerline is .1 mile east of road. UTM 11S 0560037  
4200640
27. Somewhere between 25 and 26 the route crosses the road from west to east, but unable to get UTM due to military interference with satellites
28. At Reville Mill ruins (with pond and corral) which is 22.3 miles north of the Cedar Pipeline Ranch Road satellite signals picked up again.  
UTM 11S 0555938  
4206348
29. Route crosses the WWW/RM Road from east to west 25.9 miles north of Cedar Pipeline Ranch Road and 9.9 miles south of SR 375  
UTM 11S 0557912  
4212119
30. Willow Witch Well/Reville Mill Road meets SR 375 by Warm Springs Junction
31. Route is .1 mile south of US HWY 6 @ Warm Spring Summit  
UTM 11S 0548809  
4224047

32. Route is less than .1 mile east of the Silver Bow/Golden Arrow Road as it parallels the road. UTM 11S 0525028  
4198085

33. Route crosses the Silver Bow/Golden Arrow Road 20.2 miles south of HWY 6 and 1.1 miles north of the Tonopah Test Range gate  
UTM 11S 0521443  
4194818

34. Route crosses the paved Tonopah Test Range road 19 miles south of HWY 6 and 1 mile north of the Tonopah Test Range gate.  
UTM 11S 0520171  
4194362

35. Route crosses the "Mud Lake Road" 11.6 miles south of HWY 6.  
UTM 11S 0492883  
4196541